

THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and Yale University

August 5, 1996

Mr. Eric P. Newman
6450 Cecil Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Mr. Newman:

Once again, your work has been invaluable to us.

I cannot tell you how excited I was to come upon your article, "Franklin and the Bank of North America," with its illustration of the one penny and three pence "tickets" printed by Benny Bache in 1789. Those little pieces of money are the answer to two mysteries that I've been tracking for quite some time: mysteries concerning Franklin's Passy types and the special marbled "wove" paper that he imported from England in 1780.

Perhaps by this time you know the origins of the paper Franklin gave to the Bank of North America in 1789. But in case you don't, permit me to fill you in on what has been, for me, several years' worth of painstaking research.

In the middle of June, 1779, the English typefounder William Caslon III and one of London's leading stationers, James Woodmason, visited Paris in order to try to sell their types and paper to Caron de Beaumarchais, who was planning to embark on an immense printing project: the publication of the complete works of Voltaire. While in Paris, the two men called on Franklin who, coincidentally, was at that moment setting up a printing office and typefoundry of his own. (The first item issued by the Passy press was a small invitation to a July 4 celebration that Franklin evidently printed sometime around June 25. His typefoundry was in its infancy at that moment, having been set up only two months earlier.) Also, in late June, Franklin learned that Louis XVI had agreed to loan the Americans one million livres -- this was the first of what (as you know) turned into several substantial loans.

Franklin acknowledged the receipt of the first French loan instalment with a hand-written certificate -- but it's clear that, from the outset, he wanted to be able to present the King with handsomely-printed forms. Towards this end, he ordered two reams of specially marbled wove paper from Woodmason -- the sheets were to have a strip of marbling down the center, only.

This paper took a very long time to produce (the marbler evidently had a great deal of trouble getting it perfect) and it only arrived in Passy in mid-1780, almost a year after the order. At that point, Franklin printed the deluxe forms of which I've

enclosed a photocopy. Perhaps you've seen these loan certificates reproduced -- Franklin printed identical forms on either side of the central marbled strip, and then cut down the marbling in an irregular pattern, creating a unique, indented pair. He issued fresh certificates (back-dated) to replace the handwritten ones that he had already presented to the Court, and from that time on, issued new certificates as the installments continued to be received.

It was not only the paper that was unique, however. Franklin printed the main body of text in a type font that he never used again, just as he never used the wove paper for any other printing job at Passy. This font was a "sloped roman" -- neither a roman nor a true italic. My current research project has been to try and trace this type -- to determine where Franklin might possibly have gotten it, and to try to figure out what ever became of it. As to the first question, I have come to believe that Franklin must have purchased this type directly from the imprimerie royale; "sloped roman" seems to have been an experiment in type design, engraved as part of the monumental redesign of types by the Academy at the end of the 17th century. To the best of my knowledge, this is one of its only practical applications; the Academy decided that "sloped roman" was an experiment that failed, and evidently did not use it. It was certainly unknown in the second half of the eighteenth century.

As to the second question -- what happened to this type -- your article has provided the answer: it came back to America, and ended up on the one penny note, along with several other of ^{the} types and ornaments that were made at Passy from matrices that Franklin had bought. He evidently hoarded both the remainder of the two reams of marbled wove paper (having only used about twenty sheets, I'd say, for the French loan certificates), and also the "sloped roman" type, until such time as he had an extraordinary occasion to use them again. The printing of paper currency was obviously the appropriate occasion. Once again, Franklin was thinking of ways to create money that could not be counterfeited.

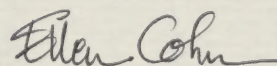
I now have two favors to ask of you. First, I would love to be able to see the entire sheet of these notes -- to examine both the pattern of marbling on the whole sheet, and the typographic peculiarities of each item. Do you still possess the sheet, described in your article, of thirteen notes? Would you be able to send me a photocopy of that sheet? Secondly, would you allow us to use the notes as an illustration in the Franklin Papers, and also in an article that I am currently preparing on the history of Franklin's Passy typefoundry? If so, we would gratefully reimburse you all expenses incurred in having an 8 x 10 black and white glossy made, showing both faces of each denomination. (Something similar to the illustration in your article.)

I know that the Historical Society of Pennsylvania has one

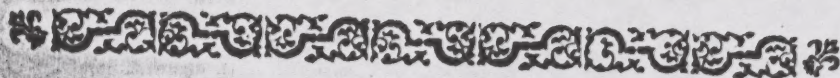
of the notes in its collection, since I managed to locate it, in great haste, last week when I was there checking Franklin letters. (That was the afternoon I "discovered" the notes, reproduced in your book on early paper money, which I perused while waiting for my manuscripts to be delivered.) Do you know where there might be other examples of the notes? My main interest in seeing them is to examine the type fonts Benny used--any typographic oddity might provide a clue to solving the remaining questions I have about Franklin's collection of types.

I thank you, again, for the superb work you've done. I hope this information is of interest to you, and I look forward to your answer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ellen Cohn". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ellen R. Cohn



N° 2.

Pour 250,000 livres.

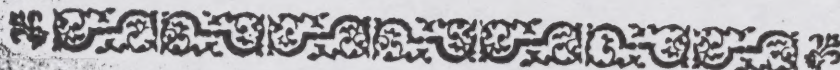
Nous Benjamin Franklin Ministre Plenipotentiaire des
ETATS-UNIS de l'Amerique Septentrionale, en vertu du pouvoir
dont nous sommes revetus par le CONGRES desdits Etats, promettons en
son nom et solidairement pour lesdits Treize ETATS-UNIS, faire
payer & rembourser au Tresor royal de S. Majeste tres chrestienne
le premier Janvier mil sept cent quatre-vingt huit au domicile de M. Grand,
Banquier a Paris, la somme de deux cent cinquante mille livres,
argent de France, avec les interets a raison de cinq pour cent, l'an, valeur
reçu comptant, a Paris, ce 10 Septembre 1779.

Franklin

← "sloped roman"

"Fancy Capitals," as
Franklin called
them, which are
also on BFB's
bank notes.

Sorry for this poor xerox — we don't have the original, only an old photostat.



N° 2.

Pour 250,000 livres.

Nous Benjamin Franklin Ministre Plenipotentiaire des
ETATS-UNIS de l'Amerique Septentrionale, en vertu du pouvoir
dont nous sommes revetus par le CONGRES desdits Etats, promettons en
son nom et solidairement pour lesdits Treize ETATS-UNIS, faire
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le premier Janvier mil sept cent quatre-vingt huit au domicile de M. Grand,
Banquier à Paris, la somme de deux cent cinquante mille livres,
argent de France, avec les interets à raison de cinq pour cent, l'an, valeur
reçu comptant, à Paris, ce 10 Septembre 1777.

Benjamin Franklin
(1777)

"sloped roman"

"Fancy Capitals," as
Franklin called
them, which are
also on BFB's
bank notes.

Sorry for this poor xerox — we don't have the original, only an old photostat.

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

August 13, 1996

Ms. Ellen R. Cohn
The Papers of Benjamin Franklin
Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240

Dear Ms. Cohn:

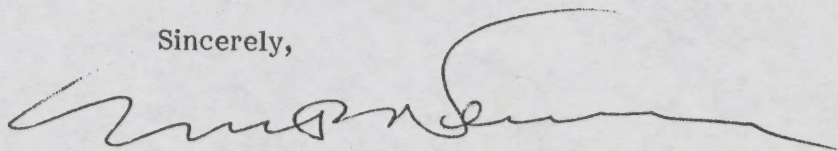
What a fascinating letter you wrote concerning the paper and printing of the Bank of North America fractional currency.

I am leaving for a convention tomorrow but wish to give a brief answer to your 8/5/96 communication first.

We have the 13 subject sheet. We have two additional 3d pieces with marbling. We will cooperate with you as always.

Please send me your telephone number.

Sincerely,



Eric P. Newman

EPN:bv

203-432-1813 *off*

203-773-9682 *res*

8/21/96 \$ sign
sent her
reprint

THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and Yale University
August 23, 1996

Mr. Eric P. Newman
6450 Cecil Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Mr. Newman:

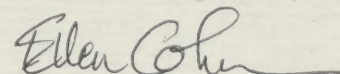
It was a pleasure speaking with you on the telephone yesterday, and I'm delighted that my work proved to be so useful to you, and arrived at such a perfect time.

Yesterday afternoon, I tried to locate copies of everything that Benny Bache printed in the years leading up to the Aurora. Among his first printing projects were a series of children's books. Not all of them are extant, but I looked at copies of the surviving ones (on microfiche) and not a single one uses the sloped roman type, or any other of the more unusual French types that Franklin had. I looked at some other issues of the Aurora as well, with the same result. I shall certainly let you know if I find out anything more.

As you undoubtedly gleaned from our phone call and the tone of my letter, I am -- and have always been -- in favor of a generous exchange of information among scholars. I hope you'll forgive me in this case, though, if I request that you acknowledge me as the source of the information on the sloped roman type and the French loan certificate. As I wrote you in my first letter, I am currently preparing an article on the subject of Franklin's printing in France, and that particular story was one of my most significant discoveries. (In fact, the article is finished except for the last questions that I'm trying to answer about this sloped roman type.) I know that you, of all people, can appreciate the amount of work that it takes to uncover information that scholars have overlooked for centuries. I have been working on this project for more than four years, piecing it together bit by bit from unidentified scraps of paper, account books, inventories that no one had been able to make sense of, etc. Since your edition will appear before my article is published, I would greatly appreciate credit in a footnote.

I'm very much looking forward to seeing the photocopies you promised, and your article on the dollar sign. I hope that we get the chance to meet some day.

With best regards,



Ellen R. Cohn

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Ellen R. Cohn
The Papers of Benjamin Franklin
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240

August 27, 1996

Dear Ellen R. Cohn:

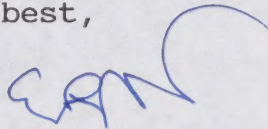
Enclosed are photocopies of the Bank of North America specie notes. I hope they serve your purpose.

Bache published General Advertisers and I assume that is part of The Aurora or a companion. I have the April 5, 1794 General Advertiser with an article on counterfeiting Bank of the U.S. notes, but it will take awhile to locate if you need it.

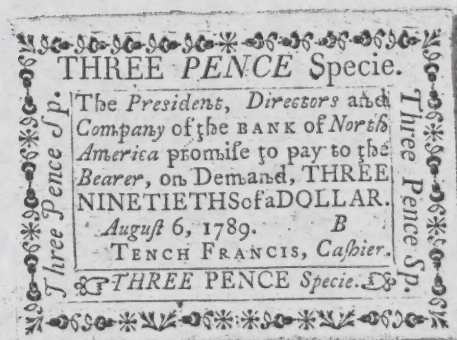
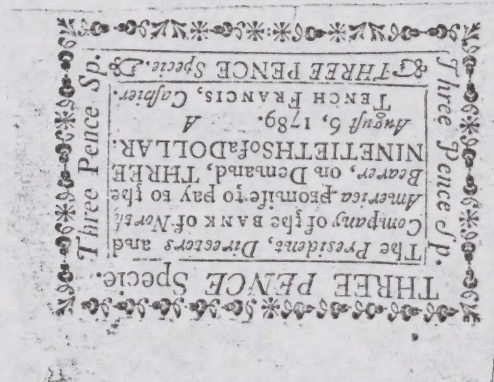
As to your August 23, 1996 letter I have no footnotes in my book (only references after each chapter), but I changed the front acknowledgement to include your name and the name of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin. That is better recognition for your contribution because all contributors to prior editions are referred to as in those editions and not named in this fourth edition. I have no idea how soon my revision will be actually printed but your study may come out about the same time I hope.

I congratulate you on your discovery.

My best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Newman', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Eric P. Newman



THREE PENCE SPECIE.
The President, Directors and Company of the Bank of North-America promise to pay to the Bearer, on Demand, THREE NINETEENTHS of a Dollar.
August 6, 1789. A
TENCH FRANCIS, Cashier.
THREE PENCE SPECIE.

One Penny Specie.
The President, Directors and Company of the Bank of North-America promise to pay to the Bearer, on demand, One Ninetieth of a Dollar.
August 6, 1789. D
Tench Francis, Cashier.

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August 6, 1789. C
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Tench Francis, Cashier.

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August 6, 1789. G
Tench Francis, Cashier.

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August 6, 1789. F
Tench Francis, Cashier.

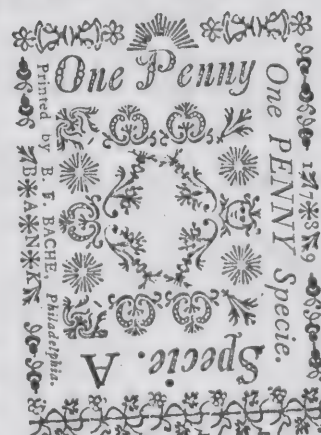
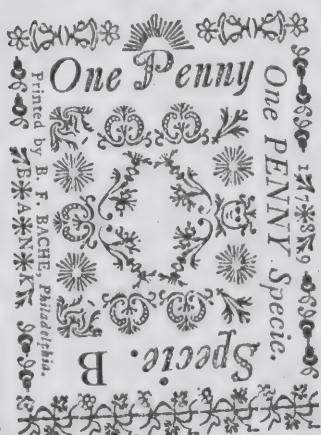
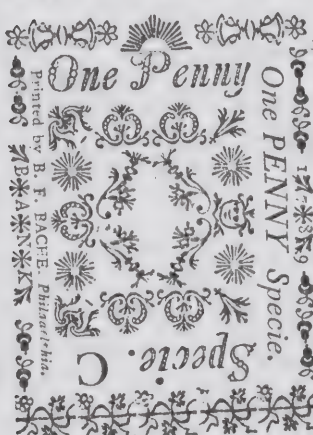
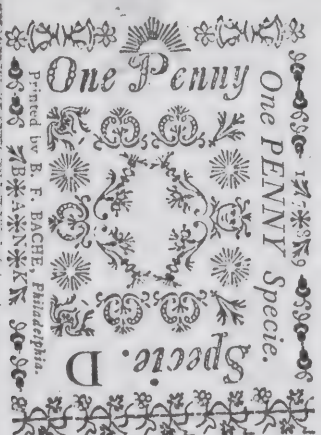
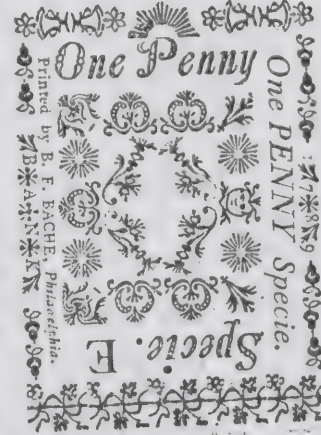
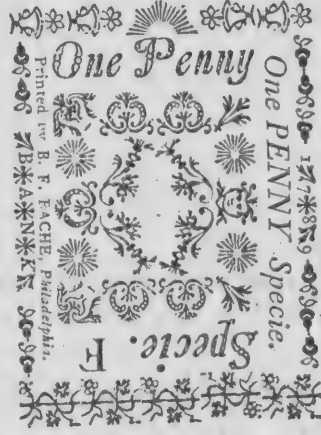
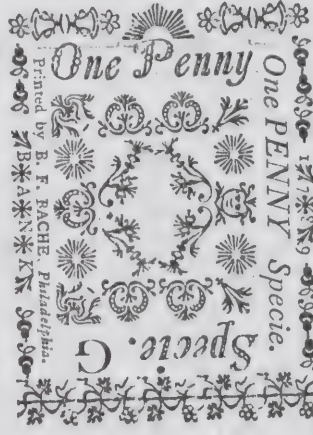
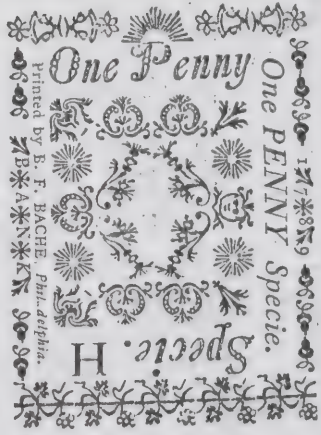
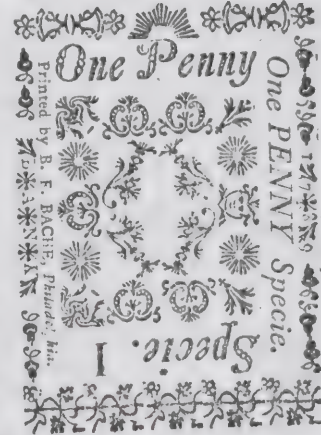
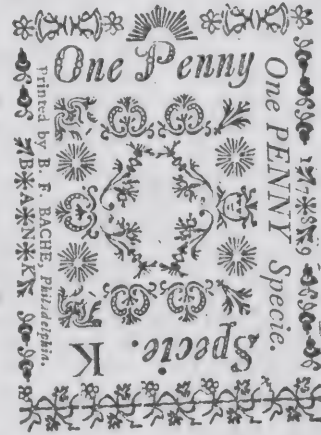
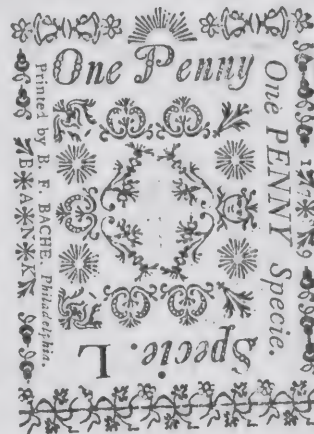
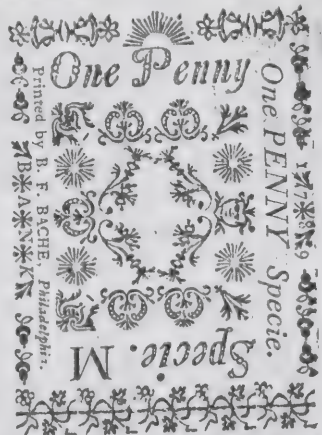
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August 6, 1789. L
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August 6, 1789. K
Tench Francis, Cashier.

One Penny Specie.
The President, Directors and Company of the Bank of North-America promise to pay to the Bearer, on demand, One Ninetieth of a Dollar.
August 6, 1789. I
Tench Francis, Cashier.



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 THREE PENCE Specie.
 The President, Directors and
 Company of the BANK of North
 America promise to pay to the
 Bearer, on Demand, THREE
 NINETEETHS of a DOLLAR.
 August 6, 1789. A
 TENCH FRANCIS, Cashier.
 THREE PENCE Specie.

Three Pence Sp.
 THREE PENCE Specie.
 The President, Directors and
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 Bearer, on Demand, THREE
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 August 6, 1789. B
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 THREE PENCE Specie.

Three Pence Sp.
 THREE PENCE
 The President, Directors
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 Bearer, on Demand, THREE
 NINETEETHS of a DOLLAR.
 August 6, 1789. A
 TENCH FRANCIS,
 THREE PENCE S

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↑ slanting
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Directors
 One Penny Specie.
 The President, Directors
 and Company of the Bank
 of North-America promise
 to pay to the Bearer, on
 demand, One Ninetieth of
 a Dollar.
 August 6, 1789. C
 Tench Francis, Cashier.

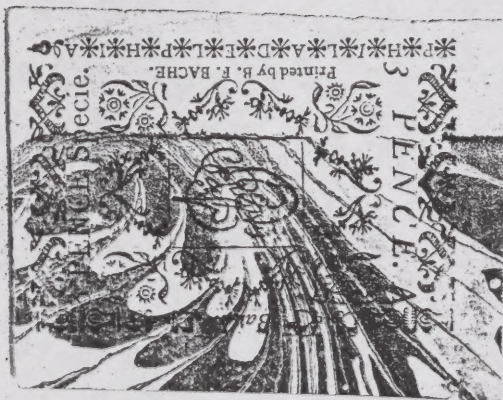
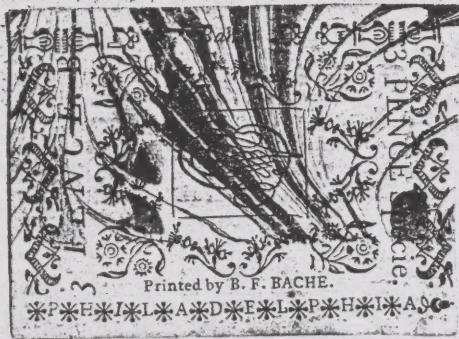
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ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

To: Ellen Cohn
The Papers of Benjamin Franklin

From: Eric P. Newman
Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society

Date 4 September 1996

Re: Bank of North America

In the 3 pence, please note:

The top border has THREE upright and PENCE is sloped Roman. In the bottom border it is the opposite in smaller type. These differ from the side borders which are similar to each other but have letter differences.

Each lower case m and n has a flourish at its end.

The a in Company, Bearer, and Cashier differs from the a in and, pay, Demand, and a.

The long s in promise. August, and Cashier is not used in President.

PHILADELPHIA is worked into the lower back border ornaments.

In the 1 penny you will find other curiosities but notice on the lower ornamented border of the face that BFB 1789 is alternated between ornaments. On the back 1789 and Bank are worked into the borders.

How many different fonts were used to print these pieces?

THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and Yale University

September 9, 1996

Mr. Eric P. Newman
6450 Cecil Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Mr. Newman:

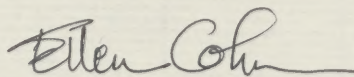
Thank you very much for your article on the dollar sign (which arrived a week or so ago), and the batch of photocopies (which arrived yesterday). The article is spectacular -- I've only had the chance to skim it, so far, but look forward to being able to read it closely. The photocopies are terrific. I haven't had the chance to examine them in great detail, yet, but just seeing how the one- and three-pence notes are laid out on the sheet is fascinating. Of special interest to me is to see the area of marbling -- it confirms that these sheets were the same paper as Franklin received in Paris, which only had the marbling down a center panel.

Some of the fonts are familiar to me from Franklin's Passy press, but others most definitely are not. Perhaps someday I'll be able to trace the origins of some of the more unusual alphabets-- that rather bizarre font on the three pence note, for instance. Benny had been given training as a type founder and also as a punch cutter. It's possible, I suppose, that he may have concocted these strange letters himself.

In any event, they're an enormous help to me, and I'm grateful to you for having copied them. May I reimburse you the expences of photocopying and postage? Please let me know.

Your idea about the acknowledgements page is fine.

All the best,



Ellen R. Cohn

Sept. 10

P.S. In response to your questions of Sept. 4:

A word of caution about "sloped roman." This term only refers to a style of lower-case letters. The capital letters in the 3 pence (PENCE, and at the bottom, THREE) are none other than standard italic capitals.

The different lower-case a's that you point out are simply the difference between roman and italic lower case letters.

The use of a lower-case s and a long s was at the discretion of the printer, and does not denote a separate font.

How many fonts were used? I couldn't tell you exactly, without comparing them all very closely. Glancing at the 3 pence, I'd say off the top of my head that there are eleven different fonts -- but that's counting roman and italic of the same style and size as different fonts, which I'm not sure is standard practice. DON'T QUOTE ME ON THIS!! I'm really not an expert.